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PRESENTATION  
OF THE  
G O L D M E D A L S,

AWARDED RESPECTIVELY TO CAPTAIN CHARLES STURT AND  
DOCTOR LUDWIG LEICHHARDT.

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THE President, Lord Colchester, thus addressed the Meeting :—

“ The Council having awarded one of the medals placed at its disposal by the munificence of the Sovereign, for the furtherance of geographical science and discovery, to Captain Charles Sturt, for his various and extensive explorations in Australia, it is my pleasing duty to remind you of the grounds upon which this honourable distinction has been bestowed.

“ So far back as the year 1827, Captain Sturt, then attached to H. M. 39th Regiment, serving in New South Wales, was appointed, in company with Mr. Hume, to follow up the discoveries of Mr. Oxley. Starting from Mount Harris, he explored the marshes of the Macquarie, and proceeding thence to the N.W. came to the bank of a large river, whose waters were found to be salt. This river he named the Darling, and followed its course about 40 miles, when he was obliged to quit it for want of drinkable water. At the close of the year 1829 Captain Sturt proceeded on an expedition to explore the course of the Murrumbidgee. He traced its downward course, from the furthest point previously reached, for 90 miles, when it delivered its waters into a broad and noble river, which was named the Murray. After descending the Murray for 9 days he passed the mouth of a stream flowing from the N., a little inferior to the Murray itself, its waters turbid but perfectly sweet. This river he considered (as proved afterwards to be the fact) to be identical with the Darling, whose upper course he had discovered in his former journey. From this junction Captain Sturt continued to descend the Murray till it emptied itself into an extensive lake which he named Alexandrina, and which he traversed till stopped by the sand-banks that separate it from the sea at Encounter Bay.

“ The discovery of the two great rivers of New South Wales would of itself give to the enterprising explorer a strong claim to the favour of this Society, but it is to Captain Sturt's more recent journey, undertaken with the view of traversing the whole extent of the continent of Australia from Adelaide to the Gulf of Carpentaria, that I wish more particularly to draw your attention. With this view Captain Sturt quitted Adelaide in August, 1844, with a party composed of Messrs. Poole, Browne, Stuart, and 14 men. Proceeding eastward to the

Murray, he followed the upward course of that river and of the Darling to Laidley's Ponds, which he reached on the 10th of October. Proceeding thence through a country, hitherto unexplored, to the N.W., he fixed his first depôt in lat.  $29^{\circ} 40'$  and long.  $141^{\circ} 45'$  on the western slope of the Cis-Darling range, not more than 300 feet above the level of the sea. Here the expedition was detained from January 17 to July 14 by the excessive drought, no rain having fallen between November and the latter date. The country, however, was reconnoitered in every direction, and Mr. Poole made an excursion as far as the eastern shore of Lake Torrens. While at this depôt the heat rose to  $133^{\circ}$  of Fahrenheit in the shade and  $157^{\circ}$  in the sun. The consumption of provisions during this long detention determined Captain Sturt to send back one-third of his party, and with the remainder, on the first fall of rain, he moved forward to a spot on the western slope, about 62 miles from the first depôt, where he formed a second, in lat.  $29^{\circ} 6'$  and long.  $141^{\circ} 5'$ . Before advancing from hence upon his main object, Captain Sturt determined to ascertain the nature of the country to the west. A journey of 69 miles brought him to the 'broad, dry, and sandy bed of an extensive lake, apparently 12 miles wide, extending to the S. beyond the range of vision, but coming round to the westward in a northerly direction, in the shape laid down for Lake Torrens.' The basin was found to be composed of sand and salt, with patches of clay and gypsum, and though apparently dry, it was too soft to bear the weight of a man. The basin contained detached sheets of dark blue salt water.

"Returning to the depôt, Capt. Sturt started from thence on the 14th of August, accompanied by Mr. Browne and a part of his men, to penetrate to the N.W. Their route for the first 70 miles lay through a country of sand-ridges alternating with long narrow flats; beyond this they found a more open country, but so dry as to make it difficult to proceed. Continuing to the N.W. they traversed extensive plains subject to inundations; then high and broken ridges of sand 80 or 100 feet high, and fiery red, brought the travellers to a stony desert 50 miles in width, beyond which other sandy ridges appeared, similar to those before passed, as if a flood had swept through the range, making this breach. In lat.  $25^{\circ} 45'$  the party found themselves on the banks of a considerable creek, coming direct from the N.N.W., with large and deep pools of water. This greatly raised their spirits. They traced it upwards of 60 miles, but though its bed was full of grass, the country was extremely barren. On the 6th of September they reached lat.  $24^{\circ} 5'$  and long.  $138^{\circ} 15'$ . Beyond this they found a salt lagoon in the bed of the creek, and crossed it to the N.W., but the country became worse and worse, and at length the impracticable character of the country, want of food and water for the horses, and the illness of Mr. Browne, compelled Captain Sturt to retrace his steps, after he had advanced 400 miles from the depôt, and reached within 200 miles of the centre of the continent. The party reached the depôt on the 3rd of October, and, after only six days' rest, Captain Sturt, taking with him Mr. Stuart and some of the men who had been left at the depôt during the former journey, again endeavoured to penetrate northward, but in

a direction less to the W. For 86 miles he pursued his former route—then keeping more to the N., his route for 40 miles lay through plains. Here he met a splendid creek 240 yards wide and 26 feet deep; crossing it, he proceeded 36 miles further over plains, and then came to the sandy ridges running in the same direction as before. Passing a lake about 12 miles in circumference, but whose waters were now putrid, he again met the stony desert in lat.  $26^{\circ} 30'$  and long.  $139^{\circ} 34'$ , about 55 miles E. of his former journey. He still pushed on to lat.  $25^{\circ} 58'$ , when the desert nature of the country, and the fear that the pools of water which had supplied him in his advance would be completely dried up by the continued drought, he reluctantly turned his face again to the S., and only just reached the great creek, or river, in time to save his horses, some of whom had actually dropped from exhaustion before reaching it. Captain Sturt traced this, which he named Cooper's Creek, upwards in an easterly direction for 65 miles, when it became salt; and afterwards split into numerous narrow streams coming from an unbroken grassy plain, stretching to the N. and E. as far as the eye could reach. A tribe of more than 400 natives were found inhabiting several villages on the banks of this creek. They were a tall race and very peaceable, and appeared to subsist on the seeds of a coarse grass, which they stacked and thrashed out, and the seed thus obtained was pounded by the women. Hence Captain Sturt returned to his depôt, but his difficulties were not yet at an end, for the country between it and Laidley's Ponds had become so burnt up by the continued drought, that it was only by killing some of his oxen, and filling their skins with water from the well at the depôt, that he was enabled to provide a sufficient supply to secure his return, which he at length effected without any loss; but his own health, which had been kept up only by the energy of his mind, so long as difficulties were to be overcome, now gave way, and he was seized with a severe illness, from which he did not recover for many weeks after his arrival at Adelaide.

“For these services in the cause of geographical discovery, for the *energy* and *courage* displayed in confronting difficulties of no ordinary character, for the *prudence* with which further advance was abandoned, when it could only have risked the loss of those intrusted to his charge, for the *conciliatory conduct* to the natives, which not only avoided hostile conflict, but rendered them willing to assist the expedition, and also to excite future explorers to a display of the like qualities, the Council have awarded the medal of the founder, and I have much pleasure in now having the opportunity of delivering it into the hands of a gentleman holding high office in the colony of South Australia, and who will be able to recount personally to Captain Sturt the high value this Society sets upon his labours.”

The President, now addressing himself to Mr. Morphett, said—

“MR. MORPHETT,—I have much pleasure in committing to your hands this medal, the highest token of distinction which the Royal Geographical Society has to bestow for the advancement of geographical knowledge.”

Mr. Morphett, rising, replied—

“ I am proud, my Lord, at being the recipient of such an honourable and well-merited testimonial from the Council of the Royal Geographical Society to my friend Captain Sturt. I beg to assure your Lordship that I will deliver this medal to Captain Sturt, and will endeavour to convey to him an impression of the elegant and encomiastic allusions which your Lordship has made to his arduous and valuable services in the cause of science.”

#### PATRON'S MEDAL.

The President then proceeding, observed—

“ The journey performed by Dr. Ludwig Leichhardt from Morton Bay to Port Essington, a distance of 1800 miles, through a country previously altogether unknown, prosecuted with almost unexampled perseverance, and crowned with the most complete success, opening to the settler in Australia new and extensive fields of enterprise, and connecting the remote settlements of New South Wales with a secure port on the confines of the Indian Archipelago, thus avoiding the circuitous and dangerous navigation through Torres Straits, has been deemed by the Council an enterprise worthy of the medal granted by our Most Gracious Patron the Queen.

“ An account of Dr. Leichhardt's journey having already appeared in the Journal of the Society, I need only remind you, that he quitted Jimba, the furthest station of the Darling Downs, on the 1st of October, 1844, with a party of 7 persons, and followed the course of the range of mountains which runs nearly parallel to the E. coast of Australia, till he reached the S.E. angle of the Gulf of Carpentaria; thence, following the coast to westward, he quitted it where it turns to the N., and, striking directly across the country, reached Port Essington on the 17th December, 1845. Among the most important results of this enterprise, are stated to be the discovery of the Mackenzie river, the Isaack's, and the Suttor, and of an easy communication between the E. coast of Australia and the Gulf of Carpentaria, across the base of the York Peninsula. Coal was found at the Mackenzie, and the Nonda country is described as highly adapted for the pursuits of the agriculturist. Dr. Leichhardt has constructed a detailed map of the country through which he travelled; and an account of the objects of natural history which he collected will shortly be laid before the public by Sir W. Hooker. One distinguishing feature of this journey is, that it is entirely the result of private enterprise, and we are so fortunate as to have obtained the presence of one of its principal promoters, Dr. Nicholson, who will receive this medal as the representative of Dr. Leichhardt, who is himself now employed in prosecuting further discoveries.

“ Dr. NICHOLSON,—I have great pleasure in delivering to you the medal of our Most Gracious Patron the Queen, as the mark of this Society's acknowledgment of the increased knowledge of the great continent of Australia gained by Dr. Leichhardt's journey; an award which shows, that neither distance, nor absence, nor foreign birth, renders the

Council unmindful of the merits of a great discoverer ; and we sincerely wish Dr. Leichhardt every success in the still vaster enterprise which he is now prosecuting, and that it may add fresh stores to geographical knowledge, and fresh honour to himself."

Dr. Nicholson rose, and returned thanks, on the part of Dr. Leichhardt, in the following terms:—

"MY LORD,—On behalf of my friend, Dr. Leichhardt, I beg to offer your Lordship my best thanks for the very handsome way in which the Royal Geographical Society has been pleased to acknowledge the services which he has rendered to geographical science by his late expedition to Port Essington. I can assure your Lordship, that even while I bear in mind the very flattering tokens of approbation which Dr. Leichhardt received on his return to Sydney, and the munificent sums of money which have been granted to him by the Colonial government and subscribed by the generous colonists of New South Wales, I still cannot hesitate to say that there is no mark of honour which will be more gratifying and encouraging to him as a man of science than that which your Lordship has just conferred on him in the name of this distinguished Society."